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**Marazion Town Council**

**Media Policy**

**Approved – 24 January 2023**

**Review – 2025 (or as required).**

**Version 1**

**1** **Introduction**

The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions, and this can only be achieved through effective communications. The media – press, radio, TV, internet – can be crucially important in conveying information to the community. The Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council.

It is important that the press have access to the Town Clerk and to background information to assist them in giving accurate information to the public. To balance this, the Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts.

This policy explains how the Council will work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

**2 Legal requirements and Restrictions**

This policy is subject to the Council’s obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, and other legislation i.e., GDPR which may apply and the Council’s standing orders and financial regulations. The Council’s financial regulations and relevant standing orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council’s publication scheme.

The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information which the disclosure of is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council’s standing orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the code of conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council’s publication scheme.

If a confidential leak does occur, an investigation will take place to establish who is responsible and appropriate action will be taken following the Marazion Town Council complaints procedure.

When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council’s solicitor before any response is made. Whenever possible any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

**3** **Meetings**

A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business.

Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council’s standing orders.

The photographing, recording, filming, or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g., using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites (such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube), which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless:

* the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present;
* such activities disrupt the proceedings;
* the photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission;
* oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting.

The Council’s standing orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming, or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a sub‐committee.

**4 Press Releases**

The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council’s position on a particular issue.

Protecting, promoting, and defending Marazion Town Council is the town councils aim.

Official Council press releases must be issued from the Town Clerks office. The Town Clerk, Chairman (Deputy Chairman in the Chairmans absence) of the Council and Councillor appointed by Full Council will ensure that the principles outlined in Section Two (Legal Framework) are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored, and that any media communication adopts the principles of protect, promote and defend Marazion Town Council.

Town Councillors have the right to issue personal press statements but must ensure that any personal statement is theirs and not the view of the town council the body corporate. Town Councillors must also give consideration when issuing a personal statement to the guidance determined in Section 2 of this policy. Out of courtesy, any Town Councillor issuing a personal statement is to let the Town Clerks office know.

**5 Media Interviews**

The Chairman of the Council is the spokesperson for the Council. In their absence then the Vice-Chairman and in both their absences the Town Council will have pre-appointed spokesperson.

It is important that whoever is being interviewed has all the facts and information and is fully prepared and this can be done by asking any questions of the media in advance about the interview content and context.

**6 Authorities to Sign off Press Release Protocol.**

The Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and a Councillor appointed by Full Council are delegated by Full Council to be able to authorise the ‘sign off’ of Council issued press releases and media interviews.

**7** **Other Communications with the Media**

The Clerk and Councillors should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media – promote, protect, and defend.

This policy does not seek to regulate Councillors in their private capacity.

The Council’s communications with the media will seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of Councillors are different to the Council’s corporate position and views, they will make this clear.

The Town Clerk may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council.

Subject to the obligations on councillors not to disclose confidential information referred to above in relation to Legal Requirements and Restrictions, and not to misrepresent the Council’s position, Councillors are free to communicate their position and views.